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UNCLAS HO CHI MINH CITY 001296

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NEW CAN THO PARTY SECRETARY - A RISING STAR?

1. (U) The Consul General met with the newly appointed Party Secretary of Can Tho Province, Nguyen Tan Quyen, on December 6.

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Can Tho, the unofficial capital of the Mekong Delta region, is one of four independently administered cities in Vietnam. Although Can Tho's 2004 growth rate of 14.6 percent was double the national rate, the outgoing Party Secretary reportedly criticized lax personnel management and the provincial government's failure to lever its central position in the Mekong Delta to become an economic and infrastructural hub for the region.

2. (SBU) Quyen expressed his desire to improve relations with the United States, placing particular emphasis on the bilateral economic relationship. Reiterating Can Tho's goal to raise per capita GDP from \$720 to \$1,200 by 2010, the Secretary emphasized the need for open and well-grounded economic policies, infrastructure development, and increased foreign and domestic investment. Mr. Quyen also expressed his determination to increase the province's economic competitiveness and advocated improving Can Tho's state-owned enterprises so "they can survive in the market environment of the WTO." While polite and responsive to all questions, Party Secretary Nguyen Tan Quyen remained formal throughout his discussion with the Consul General.

3. (SBU) Bio Notes: Born in 1953 in Tra Vinh Province, Quyen grew up in the former Hau Giang Province (Hau Giang was later split into Can Tho Province and Soc Trang Province). He spent several years working for the Youth Union before becoming Chairman of the Labor Federation of Hau Giang. Additionally, Quyen served as the Deputy Head of Personnel and Organizational Affairs for both the Can Tho and Soc Trang Party Committees and as the Deputy Party Secretary of Soc Trang Province. In 2000, Quyen was appointed Party Secretary of Soc Trang, a position he held until 2002. He holds an advanced degree in politics and is married with two children.

4. (SBU) Continued Bio Notes: After only two years as Soc Trang's Party Secretary, Quyen was sent to Hanoi to become the Deputy Chief of the Central Committee for Internal Political Protection. The Central Committee for Internal Political Protection is responsible for maintaining the Vietnamese political system and the continued primacy of the Vietnamese Communist Party. The Committee supervises the Supreme People's Court and Vietnam's internal security apparatus. Two well-placed contacts in Can Tho portrayed Quyen as an open and engaging interlocutor. They said he has a special interest in rural poverty alleviation and is not considered to be particularly politically conservative.

5. Comment: Quyen's early departure from Soc Trang, transfer to Hanoi and promotion to Party Secretary in Can Tho indicates the high degree of confidence that the Vietnamese Communist Party places in him. Should he succeed in Can Tho, he will be a potential candidate for future national office, having served the Party at both the provincial and national level. End Comment.

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